



**BRIEFING: November 14, 2012 AGENDA ITEM #4**

**TO:** Chairman Richard and Board Members

**FROM:** Mark McLoughlin, Interim Deputy Director for Environmental Planning

**DATE:** November 5, 2012

**RE:** Approach to Project Environmental Mitigation

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**Background**

On May 3, 2012, the Board certified the Merced to Fresno High-Speed Train Final Project (Project) EIR/EIS, which included mitigation measures to avoid, reduce, and minimize adverse environmental impacts associated with future construction and operation of the project. The purpose of this item is to summarize the Authority's approach to implementing mitigation measures, describe the project's benefits, and ways the Authority is working with other state and federal agencies to achieve common state objectives for enhancing our natural and community environments.

**Discussion**

To implement many of the mitigation measures for the Project, signed interagency agreements are needed prior to project construction. These agreements will provide details on Authority implementation and monitoring requirements, financial and reporting responsibilities, and specify when measures are to be implemented. The staff presentation will describe several of the agreements, including those with the California Department of Conservation, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Agreements will also ultimately be needed with a number of other state and local agencies.

This purpose of this presentation is to provide the Board with a basic understanding of the Authority's mitigation commitments and a preview of the agreements that it will need to eventually review, consider and approve to allow the Project to advance to construction. Adoption of the agreements will:

- Preserve in perpetuity +/- 1,400 acres for continued agricultural use between Merced and Fresno. Of this total, 310 acres are within Construction Package 01.
- Achieve a net zero increase in emissions during construction; achieve a net improvement in regional air quality during project operation; and achieve a reduction in greenhouse gases.
- Achieve a no net loss to wetlands and aquatic resources.
- Avoid, minimize or reduce harm to endangered/threatened species.
- Fully mitigate for state endangered/threatened species.
- Comply with water quality requirements through design standards during construction and operation of the train.

- Avoid, minimize or reduce stream flow impacts to existing flood protection facilities.

The first agreement is on the board agenda today for your consideration, with others to follow into the spring of 2013. Authority staff will begin bringing these agreements forward for review and approval.

### **Recommendations**

This is an informational item, with no formal action required.